



# POEMS

## IRIS TREE





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POEMS BY  
IRIS TREE

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HEAD OF IRIS TREE

BY JACOB EPSTEIN



**Poems**  
by  
**Iris Tree**

*Decorations by*  
**Curtis Moffat**

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## ROCKETS AND ASHES





YOU preach to me of laws, you tie my limbs  
With rights and wrongs and arguments of good,  
You choke my songs and fill my mouth with hymns,  
You stop my heart and turn it into wood.

I serve not God, but make my idol fair  
From clay of brown earth, painted bright with blood,  
Dressed in sweet flesh and wonder of wild hair  
By Beauty's fingers to her changing mood.

The long line of the sea, the straight horizon,  
The toss of flowers, the prance of milky feet,  
And moonlight clear as glass my great religion,  
And sunrise falling on the quiet street.

The coloured crowd, the unrestrained, the gay,  
And lovers in the secret sheets of night  
Trembling like instruments of music, till the day  
Stands marvelling at their sleeping bodies white.

Age creeps upon your timid little faces  
Beneath each black umbrella sly and slow,  
Proud in the unimportance of your places  
You sit in twilight prophesying woe.

So dim and false and grey, take my compassion,  
I from my pageant golden as the day  
Pity your littleness from all my passion,  
Leave you my sins to weep and whine away!

1914

WE are the caretakers of empty houses,  
The moon leans her slender body against the door,  
But the lock is jarred with rust.  
The sun looks in through the window,  
But its closed shutters are as blinded eyes.  
Our souls are full of dead and beautiful things  
Like bowls of potpourri,  
A dust of petals  
Rustling through the tired fingers of a ghost.

1918

FROM far away the lost adventures gleam,  
The print of childhood's feet that dance and run,  
The love of her who showed me to the sun  
In triumph of creation, who did seem  
With vivid spirit like a rainbow stream  
To paint the shells, young blossoms, one by one  
Each strange and delicate toy, whose hands have spun  
The woven cloth of wonder like a dream . . .  
The row of soldiered books, authority  
Sharp as the scales I strummed upon the keys,  
The priest who damned the things I dared not praise,  
Rebellion, love made sad with mystery—  
And like a firefly through the twilit trees  
Romance, the golden play-boy of my days.

1917

**G**IVE me, O God, the power of laughter still,  
I shall have need of humour, deftest foil  
Against the army of infuriated pride,  
Against the shields of reason, and the spears  
Of savage moments, sharp-edged bitterness;  
Against the blazoned armour of intolerance,  
And all the flags of sentiment waved aloft. . . .

Love, Humour, and Rebellion, go with me,  
Three musketeers of faithful following.  
We will fear nothing.—Is not laughter brave,  
That unconcerned goes rippling through despair?  
Is not rebellion brave, that fiercely moves  
Against the buttressed prisons of the world?  
And is not love the bravest of them all,  
So frail to hold his white hands up to Heaven  
While the red fists are threatening all around,  
And hate is beating on the batteldrums?  
As d'Artagnan upon a starved grey horse  
Goes singing ballads on adventurous roads,  
I ride my fancy blithely into danger  
To throw my gauntlet at the feet of pride  
And stick my roses in the cap of Love. . . .

1916

WINDING down the street in wearied gaiety, the barrel-  
organ dribbled out its song  
Merged with the thud of feet forever dallying indifferent  
and indefinite along.  
The houses stood like rows of cripples, some paralysed,  
some hunch-backed and some bent with age,  
They seemed at war, their chimneys threatening, their  
brows hung heavy in a sombre rage.  
Crab-like the children crawled, while always hammering  
above their heads the scolding shrewish tongue;  
They grew as bloodless flowers unflourishing, waxen and  
pale from out the dust and dung.  
Above I saw the strip of sunset fluttering, even as washed-  
out rags upon the line,  
I listened to the sparrows twittering, and the hours ticking  
in a slow decline.  
Then beaded on the hem of evening, the coloured lights  
were threaded here and there,  
Till proud with sweets and plumes and oranges, the shops  
grew brilliant in the tinsel glare.  
Grey was the death-bed of the twilight, shuddering the  
faint hands of the day stretched to the night,  
Fending it off, or feebly wavering over the pallid glints of  
stolen light.  
And grey the faces that were gathering among the fallen  
ashes of the day,  
And red the faces, yellow, flickering, under the lamps upon  
the long highway.  
And some were gashed with smiles, and quaint grimaces of  
hate and pain and hunger and despair,  
And some wore coloured hats and meek frivolities, limp  
ribbons, and false pansies in their hair,  
But all were cold, and all seemed passionless; there shone  
no zest or splendour in their lives,  
Nor hope in anything but holidays, or watching funerals,  
or taking wives.

I dared not think, for truth rose horrible, slapping the face  
with coarse uncaring hand,  
But like them cheated into merriment, I wilfully refused to  
understand;  
Turned me away from wan-eyed poverty, trod pity under-  
foot, oh, danced on grief,  
Bade the crowd sing and fill my desolation, bade them be  
glad and hide my disbelief.

Strange we so love the world—for presently, out of my  
window looking on the city,  
I blessed the night, and the roofs slumbering all huddled,  
and I felt no shame nor pity  
For all our dusty days of journeying amid the wreck and  
ruins of our dreams,  
Meandering in a bleared forgetfulness, where lethe laps  
the wharf of sleeping streams.  
I only breathed the air, intensified by the ascending breath  
of million lungs,  
And heard the labouring metropolis, quickened by whispers  
of a million tongues;  
And felt a king of splendid loneliness, and felt an atom of  
the peopled spaces,  
And felt again my lordly egoism, one face distinct among  
the blur of faces.

1913

TRANQUILLITY stirred by a sudden spasm,  
Knives of rain that cut the silence,  
Storms that rattle the bones of the forest,  
Calm of the marble-terraced night  
Charred with the spattering of rockets.

Drums will I hear and battles now,  
And the long death howl of wolves by night,  
Watching the moon on the forest tops,  
Walking with delicate frightened steps  
To the slaughter-house of a red sunrise.

1918

**I** COULD explain

The complicated lore that drags the soul  
From what shall profit him  
To gild damnation with his choicest gold.

But you

Are poring over precious books and do not hear  
Our plaintive, frivolous songs;  
For we in stubborn vanity ascend  
On ladders insecure,  
Toward the tottering balconies  
To serenade our painted paramours;  
Caught by the lure of dangerous pale hands,  
Oblivion's heavy lids on sleepless eyes  
That cheat between unrest and false repose.

And we are haunted

By spectral Joy once murdered in a rage,  
Now taking shape of Pleasure,  
Disguised in many clothes and skilful masks.

I could disclose

The truth that hangs between our lies  
And jostles sleep to semi-consciousness;  
Truth, that stings like nettles  
Our frail hands dare not pluck  
From out our garden's terraced indolence.

We are not happy,

And you make us dumb with loving hands  
Reproachful on our lips.

Nor can we sob our sorrows on your breast,  
For we have bartered diamonds for glass,  
Our tears for smiles,  
Eternity for now.

1917

I FEEL in me a manifold desire  
From many lands and times and clamouring peoples,  
And I the Queen  
Of crowding vagabonds,  
Ghosts of lost years in seeming fancy dress,  
With pathos of torn laces  
And broken swords;  
Cut-throats and kings and poets  
Who have loved me  
In visions wild, not knowing  
What I was.  
In me no end  
Even where the last content  
Clasps on my head a crown  
Of shining endurance—  
I slip from all my robes  
Into the rags of a tattered romance;  
The stars crowd at the window,  
Their jealous destiny  
Raps at the door—  
They bob and wink and leer,  
And I must leave the lamplight for the road  
To keep strange company.  
Farewell and Hail!

1917

# SILENCE—

Somewhere on earth

There is a purpose that I miss or have forgotten.  
The trees stand bolt upright  
Like roofless pillars of a broken temple.  
There is a purpose in Heaven,  
But for me  
Nothing.

1917

I SHOULD like to say to the world:

I have launched my soul like a ship upon free waters;  
Beautiful she stands in the docks with proud masts cutting  
the sky,

Perfectly poised, her white sails spreading like wings,  
Her figurehead a woman with breasts that daunt the spray,  
Her flag a flutter of coloured exuberance.

I should like to see her plunging out of the idle harbour  
Where the sulky tide drifts scum, and the sailors wrangle  
and shout,

In a thunder of churning waves ramping before her like  
dappled stallions,

Blossoming behind her a field of etiolate lilies. . . .

But to the mimicking, plotting, miserly, cynical,  
To the rabble and gabble that dance and kill on the quay,  
I can only say that my soul is a sleeping gondola  
Lulled by a jester's mandolin, till night is atinkle with tunes  
And lantern-lights, along the indolent backwaters.

1915

YOU pass as in a drugged delirium  
Wrought strange upon the mind's distraction;  
You sing a blasphemous Te Deum  
To harlot virgins, and a fraction  
Of your fuliginous colour passes,  
Stains my spirit's great conception  
As it dips into your glasses.  
I that am the sole exception  
To your stillborn, false devices,  
I that know you, I that hate you,  
I that drank now spit your vices  
Through my loathing reinstate you;  
Dive once more into the stagnance,  
Kiss your cynic lips and drink you,  
Concentrate your cruel fragrance,  
Steal your flowers before I sink you,  
Lift with hate instead of praises,  
Show you honour of my scorning,  
Garlanded you go to blazes  
With my rhymes for your adorning!

1913

**O** FACES that look so coldly at me,  
Colder than dawn through the windows of festival,  
Colder than dawn with her grey nun's face.  
You blame me, you curse me with your eyes,  
While your lips are filled with flattering syllables,  
With tinkling bells that harass my calm,  
Disturb my silence and shatter my thoughts.  
Your laughter waltzes like musical boxes,  
How can I hear the triumphant symphonies?  
The scarlet rhapsodies and beryl-cold sonatas? . . .  
Ah, strangers, ah, vacant tedious faces,  
Bobbing beneath the feathery hats,  
You have stolen the wings of birds for your garnishing,  
And the stars and the dim pale petals of the sea  
To make your breasts resplendent, to glitter your dress,—  
How I might love you and weep for you,  
Crowning your brows with a wreath of songs  
If you could understand my singing,  
If you could understand my love!  
But you are waltzing with your marionettes  
And marching to the music of the clock—  
I cannot bear you to watch me  
With those cold eyes through which I see,  
Emptiness only and dust.

1918

I SEE myself in many different dresses,  
In many moods, and many different places;  
All gold amid the grey where solemn faces  
Are silence to my mirth—a flame that blesses  
From yellow lamp the darkness which oppresses . . .  
Or mid the dancers in their trivial laces  
Aloof, as in the ring a lion paces,  
Disdainful of their slander or caresses.  
I see myself the child of many races,  
Poisoners, martyrs, harlots and princesses;  
Within my soul a thousand weary traces  
Of pain and joy and passionate excesses—  
Eternal beauty that our brief love chases  
With snatch of desperate hands and dying tresses.

1917

**T**HREE are songs enough of love, of joy, of grief:  
Roads to the sunset, alleys to the moon;  
Poems of the red rose and the golden leaf,  
Fantastic faery and gay ballad tune.

The long road unto nothing I will sing,  
Sing on one note, monotonous and dry,  
Of sameness, calmness and the years that bring  
No more emotion than the fear to die.

Grey house, grey house and after that grey house,  
Another house as grey and steep and still:  
An old cat tired of playing with a mouse,  
A sick child tired of chasing down the hill.

Shuffle and hurry, idle feet, and slow,  
Grim face and merry face, so ugly all!  
Why do you hurry? Where is there to go?  
Why are you shouting? Who is there to call?

Lovers still kissing, feverish to drain  
Stale juices from the shrivelled fruit of lust:  
A black umbrella held up in the rain,  
The raindrops making patterns in the dust.

If this distaste I hold for fools is such,  
Shall I not spit upon myself as well?  
Do I not eat and drink and smile as much?  
Do I not fatten also in this hell?

Sadness and joy—if they were melted up,  
Things that were great—upon the fires of time  
Drop but as soup in the accustomed cup,  
Settle in stagnance, trickle into grime.

Faith, freedom, art that fire a man or two  
And set him like a pilgrim on his way  
With Beauty's face before him—what of you,  
Priest, Butcher, Scholar, King, upon that day?

The dullard-masses that no god can save!  
If I were God, to rise and strike you down  
And break your churches in an angry wave  
And make a furious bonfire of your town!

God in a coloured globe, alone and still,  
Embroidering wonders with a fearless brain,  
On loom of spaces measureless, to fill  
The empty air with passion and with pain.

Emblazon all the heavens with desire  
And Wisdom delved for in the depths of time—  
Thoughts sculptured mountainous, and fancy's fire  
Caught in the running swiftness of a rhyme.

Passion high-pedestalled, pangs turned to treasure,  
Perfected and undone and built afresh  
With concentrated agony and Pleasure . . .  
If I were God, and not a weight of flesh!

1914

**H**OW often, when the thought of suicide  
With ghostly weapon beckons us to die,  
The ghosts of many foods alluring glide  
On golden dishes, wine in purple tide  
To drown our whim. Things danced before the eye  
Like tasselled grapes to Tantalus: The sly  
Blue of a curling trout, the batten'd pride  
Of ham in frills, complacent quails that lie  
Resigned to death like heroes—July peas,  
Expectant bottles foaming at the brink—  
White bread, and honey of the golden bees—  
A peach with velvet coat, some prawns in pink,  
A slice of beef carved deftly, Stilton cheese,  
And cup where berries float and bubbles wink.

1917

IT is still something to have cheated God  
And bored the Devil with so easy prey,  
And in the midst of summer woods to raise  
A leafless tree whose stark limbs mock at Heaven,  
Flaunting an iron hatred in the midst of hope—  
Yet sometimes in the loneliness of night  
My buried longings blossom on the boughs,  
My wistful longings come out star by star,  
Till the great sky is light with my desire,  
And on the winds my songs are galloping. . . .  
Ah, to what dismal greyness creeps the soul  
Too weak, too tired, to struggle from the slough!  
My weapons rust, my pen is in the dust,  
The moulting feathers plucked from out my wings  
Lie dangling in the hats I stole them for.  
My heart is floating in a claret cup,  
My brain is toppling drunken at the brim,  
My life is drowned within the lurid dregs.  
I turn and fold my hands in a last appeal,  
What heaven shall I pray to and for what,  
Now that my songs to penny tunes are set,  
And nothing is to save of me but flesh?

1913

WHAT words that move on wings in a long drift  
Can waft this silence into weary ears,  
And steal into the veins and fingertips  
Of restless bodies, like magnificent ships  
Proud from the seas that calmly sail through fears,  
Mean streets, and miseries, with passage swift.  
What words pricked from the stars and shimmering together,  
Or swept like little winds through leaves alert,  
Can filter through the chinks of bolted doors  
Deaf to the clamours knocking without pause,  
Steeled with indifference against all hurt,  
Deaf to the cry of man, and rack of weather:  
To sing the hubbub of this glittering night,  
Where all the lamps each with a separate soul  
Throb to the ecstasies of dancing life;  
And Beauty, gleaming high her magic knife  
Cuts free the tethered heart from long control  
And flings it like a ball with mad delight  
Into the silver lap of the young moon.  
What needles quick, what threads, what fingers fine  
Can broider tapestries as rich as these,  
Stranger than dreams and drifting melodies,  
Transparent as the gods we half divine,  
Frail as the thoughts that dwindle in a swoon  
Ghostly before begetting. Tinged with pain  
That glimmers pale on hands we cannot find,  
And visioned faces that our dreams create  
Born in the land forbidden us of fate  
And longed for all our lives . . . What words can bind  
Forever Joy, that never comes again!

I THINK myself

The fool of tragedy strutting upon the stage  
Where murder creeps and whispers.  
The jester clad in piebald tights  
Half black, half golden, with no company  
Save bells that jingle,  
And an effigy,  
The grinning image painted like myself  
Upon a stick. . . .

I think myself

The fool of comedy mournfully straying  
Amid the revellers,  
Loving the moon and my own shadow  
With its strange solemn gestures—  
Loving the painted moon  
That lets me play with shadows.

I am the jester on an empty stage

Playing a pantomime  
To spectres in the stalls,  
Listening at last  
For ghostly mirth and phantom hands applauding,  
And for some king with decadent tired fingers  
To fling a white gardenia at my feet.

1918

THE adored, wild, strange, irresistible,  
How they fail one at the last!  
What is there in your faces  
That we should worship with our souls?  
Most lovable, perfidious,  
Vague—  
Molesting even our visions  
With treacherous pathos.  
O vulgarity, mediocrity, stupidity,  
What is it in you that makes us lavish our love,  
Covering your meagre bodies  
With our passionate mantle, dyed with blood and dreams?  
Life and its grey days, and time  
Are a thin curtain through which you shadow,  
Or a dim glass through which you peer.  
You climb in at the windows of our souls  
With ladders and stratagems,  
You mope in corners with reproachful eyes.  
But what do you do for us  
Lute players, dancers, deceivers,  
Other than lie with red lips  
And cajole with tears of beryl?  
People—  
Men and women with laughable, tragic faces  
Winking at love,  
Treading our songs and illusions  
Under petulant feet!

1917

## A ROSE

WHAT do you ask of me with your beauty, what are you  
urging  
Of labour and painful aspiring to flatter your perfection?  
What secretness of love with terrible blushes surging  
Unseen, have found in you at last their passionate reflection?

What dreams that lovers knew, as sleep with subtle magic  
Tore off the rags of life and made her dance with body  
spangled,  
Drew back the vacant hours, the tedious and the tragic,  
And showed the glittering souls from bodies we had  
mangled;—

What visions made you, emblem of longing and love that  
has died unrequited,  
And all lost joys, and tears, and beauty passionately given,  
Winked at by folly, skewered by the butcher, danced on and  
slighted,  
That now spring up from death, showing their slayers the  
colours of Heaven?

You have burst from the ground with your joy, you are  
pining and bleeding,  
Your scent is heavy with sorrowful love; oh, memories  
clinging,  
What do you ask of my soul with such fierceness of pleading,  
I that was glad to forget . . . What do you need of my  
singing?

1916

L IKE flocks of tired birds when autumn comes,  
My spirit flags across the darkening fields  
And melts into the drabness of the sky  
And falls like dust upon the huddled corn.  
But many wizened faces brown and sad  
Peer from the bushes as I wander past,—  
They tell me all those things that old men say  
As youth looks up through tears with pallid cheek.  
“When you are grey and crooked as ourselves,  
When you have bowed before all other gods,  
And found them false, then shall you come at last  
To that dark King of grief, and he shall bless  
Your bread with tears, and manacle your hands,  
And call you slave and lover.” . . .  
Shall not a child take Pain for company  
And share her loneliness with him?  
Does not a youth know tears  
In the first bitterness of broken love?  
Is Grief so proud a king that none shall come  
To seek him save the blind, the halt, the lame? . . .  
He is a tramp, a beggar, and a clown,  
He sits a jester at the feet of kings  
And scurries with the leaves in Autumn’s train.  
He rides the wooden horses at a fair,  
And dances with the jiggers on the stage.  
Led by the violins of discontent  
That whine their music to my listening soul,  
I dance with him the dance of withered leaves,  
We dance together to the tunes of rain  
Played on one note upon the only string.

1913

OH, just beyond the curve of ideal quest  
That changes as a sea wave to the wind,  
Beyond the cloud that folds around a star,  
And dawn, that stands ajar to let us in,  
Lies that to which our loves and dreams have gone,  
The paradise of all we might have been,  
While we are washed back downwards in the dark  
Where tides recede, to dwindle with the foam.

1917

AH! you, from the small high-walled acre of your lives,  
Your windows only looking upon gardens,  
Only perceiving love and death and truth  
As facts that come to pass,  
That pass and leave you still  
Within your safe small prisons,  
Older, duller,  
To walk and talk among the evergreens.  
You have never known  
Delight of dying slowly,  
Poisoned with raptures  
In many hues from the slim-cut decanters of death—  
The tunes  
That dishevel and smooth,  
Cajole and melancholize—  
The dance  
Which is a whirling of leaves  
In their last scorn of sorrow  
Flung upwards by the wind  
Into the haggard face of winter—  
Nor felt your souls go blowing like balloons  
Tossed by impulsive hands;  
Nor slid as skaters swiftly  
Over the crackling crystals of perilous ice,  
Buffeted with bouquets and blinded with confetti . . .  
You have not felt the abandon  
Of light love  
Dragged by the hair across a slippery floor. . . .

1916

**M**OUTH of the dust I kiss, corruption absolute,  
Worm, that shall come at last to be my paramour,  
Envenomed, unseen wanderer who alone is mute,  
Yet greater than gods or heroes that have gone before.

For you I sheave the harvest of my hair,  
For you the whiteness of my flesh, my passion's valour,  
For you I throw upon the grey screen of the air  
My prism-like conceptions, my gigantic colour.

For you the delicate hands that fashion to make great  
Clay, and white paper, plant a tongue in silence,  
For you the battle-frenzy, and the might of hate,  
Science for giving wounds, and healing science.

For you the heart's wild love, beauty, long care,  
Virginity, passionate womanhood, perfected wholeness,  
For you the unborn child that I prepare,  
You, flabby, boneless, brainless, senseless, soulless!

1913

THE curtains are drawn as though it still were night,  
A slip of dawn between them is a dangling silver  
ribbon;

And all about the room is quietness—Each patient chair  
Erect, alert, in place. A letter on the table and a book  
Lie as you left them, now bereft of purpose—  
Garish a little in the room's sedateness, you  
Returning dressed so frivolously in all your coloured  
clothes!

How grey and sober, full of placid wit  
The furniture, the pictures on the wall;  
How steely swift the light, stabbing you to the heart  
As you stand at the window, bright as rushing blood.  
Garish your hair, your shoes, your startling chalky face  
And white, white gloves . . .

What time is it? . . . Still ticks the tireless clock,  
With face grimacing . . . nearly six it is. . . .  
Yet hurries not nor lingers, like our hearts,  
For in its dial eternity is housed—  
A cock should crow . . . there are no cocks in town!  
But a water cart with surly noise below  
Grates unconcerned along the disconsolate street.  
How cold and how familiar all these things,  
To you so lonely in the enormous dawn  
Slowly unfastening that vermillion dress . . .

1916

## BLACK VELVET

THE darkness of the trees at deep midnight  
And sombreness of shadows in the lake;  
A mountain in the starlight wide awake  
Dreaming to Heaven with imperial might  
Of lifted shoulders, huge against the bright  
Bespattered jewelry of stars—the ache  
Of silence, and the sobbing tides that break  
From music. Slumbering cities—candle light  
Snuffed in the flooding darkness, and the train  
Of Queens that go to scaffold for a sin—  
Or splash of blackness manifest of pain,  
Hamlet among his court, a Harlequin  
Of tragedies . . . Mysterious . . . And again  
Venetian masks against a milky skin.

1917

## NERVES

THESE curious looms where we have spun our fancies,  
These intricate webs where our desires are threaded,  
These weird trapezes that our passion frenzies  
Strange acrobats to catch them dizzy headed.  
These tightening strings upon our spirit's fiddles  
Tuneful or out of tune where music hungers  
From writhing bow, these intertwining riddles  
Mazes and labyrinths and storms and languors.  
These colours twinging on a prism's edges,  
These speckled patterns of fanatic madness  
From glittering eyeballs, these unresting dredges  
For pearls within the depths of sadness and of gladness—  
O tortuous thoughts, what are you seeking after →  
As flies around a carcass with a humming dreary,  
Gibing the silent dead with treacherous laughter,  
Molesting quietness and waking up the weary!  
What then, what then, can sleep not crush you to forget-  
ting  
With all her body's beauty, cannot peace submerge you  
O wrangling, juggling, jangling, pirouetting—  
What hope can drag you from the small desires that urge  
you?  
You have lassoed the moon and trapped the sun's bright  
lion,  
And trodden out the red stars into ashes,  
Destroyed night's temple and broken the pillars of iron,  
And striped the snowy horses of the clouds with zebra  
gashes . . .  
You have debauched the world! And as I sit here weary,  
Deafened with your demands and torn in tatters,  
The world seems suddenly most passionless and dreary,  
A poor bewildered clown—and nothing matters.

**M**Y pain has all the patience of a nun  
Who kneels and prays for Heaven on the stone,  
In some chill cellar where the amens moan,  
Ave Maria, the long penance spun  
Forever. And the tapers one by one  
Stand like cold angels round the Virgin's throne.  
My soul is tired from kneeling all alone,  
Its little candles yearning to the sun.

Long have I dreamed of Paradise and seen  
Bright mirages of glory on the grey  
Of sad horizons; I have kept the green  
Surprise of spring through winter and dismay,  
Tasting within the bitter dregs of spleen  
Drugs that bring peace, and wine that maketh gay.

1917

THE scandal-monger after all is right—  
The old and cunning voice with weary repetition  
Is justified in all dull words and warnings.  
I see at last how you,  
Spendthrift of passion  
In love's bankruptcy,  
Borrow new beauty from each passing face—  
How being too lavish you did steal  
From generous hands—  
You are the idol builder and the robber of temples,  
Praising with passionate psalms  
The thing you cannot worship—  
And yet your prayers have stirred  
Belief in us—  
We see beyond the false and weary face  
Into your haggard soul and trust from pity—  
We hear beyond the idle music of your voice,  
A wisdom taught by cruelty  
And a tired scorn of treachery and guile—  
We see your wounds and weep,  
You meet our pity with a traitor's kiss—  
For, you are schooled in suffering and schooled  
In teaching pain to others—  
And all that mob of furious accusation  
To which you turn the cheek, or curse so well,  
Are but the ghosts of bodies you have murdered,  
That drive you on in vengeance to fresh crime.

1917

WOODS of brown gloom sombre with the hush of  
death,

Wind's lassitude that sets the tired leaves shivering,  
Starved yellow leaves sighing beneath the feet, a breath  
Consumptive, old, and fever-red leaves quivering,  
As with an earthward flutter like a ghostly butterfly  
Listless they perish, wavering and hovering.

Skeleton branches where the rooks flap wings and cry,  
Perched upon ribs and fingers; and the white mists covering  
The far-off hills and bloodless visage of the sun.

No noise save the meandering dribble of a rivulet,  
No noise save of the slow hours dropping one by one  
As embers, no colour save Time's ashen coverlet. . . .  
How melancholy here the gayest tunes would sound  
From shrill carousers riotous and merry all,  
As echoes of lost joy their dancing feet upon the ground,  
As funeral bagpipes at a burial.

And I who wander passionless and forlorn,  
A leaf-forsaken tree symbolic of dejection,  
In rags of old desires, dispirited and torn,  
See in the stagnant glass of Time my soul's reflection.

1916

**I** FEEL so much alone,  
And yet I know that many hopes are storming  
My shut heart;  
For I am bolted fast in my own house.  
I pace distracted through its corridors  
To the music of Love's knocking hands  
Against the gate,  
Or silence when they sleep.  
I cannot find the key to let them in,  
I, my own host and guest and ghost,  
Imprisoned in myself!

1917

## THE COMPLEX LIFE

**I** KNOW it to be true that those who live  
As do the grasses and the lilies of the field  
Receiving joy from Heaven, sweetly yield  
Their joy to Earth, and taking Beauty, give.

But we are gathered for the looms of Fate  
That Time with ever-turning multiplying wheels  
Spins into complex patterns and conceals  
His huge invention with forms intricate.

Each generation blindly fills the plan,  
A sorry muddle or an inspiration of God  
With many processes from out the sod,  
The Earth and Heaven are mingled and made man.

We must be tired and sleepless, gaily sad,  
Frothing like waves in clamorous confusion,  
A chemistry of subtle interfusion,  
Experiments of genius that the ignorant call mad.

We spell the crimes of our unruly days,  
We see a fabled Arcady in our mind,  
We crave perfection that we may not find.  
Time laughs within the clock and Destiny plays.

You peasants and you hermits, simple livers!  
So picturesquely pure, all unconcerned  
While we give up our bodies to be burned,  
And dredge for treasure in the muddy rivers.

We drink and die and sell ourselves for power,  
We hunt with treacherous steps and stealthy knife,  
We make a gaudy havoc of our life  
And live a thousand ages in an hour.

Our loves are spoilt by introspective guile,  
We vivisect our souls with elaborate tools,  
We dance in couples to the tune of fools,  
And dream of harassed continents the while.

Subconscious visions hold us and we fashion  
Delirious verses, tortured statues, spasms of paint,  
Make cryptic perorations of complaint,  
Inverted religion, and perverted passion.

But since we are children of this age,  
In curious ways discovering salvation,  
I will not quit my muddled generation,  
But ever plead for Beauty in this rage.

Although I know that Nature's bounty yields  
Unto simplicity a beautiful content,  
Only when battle breaks me and my strength is spent  
Will I give back my body to the fields.

1917

**S**HALL we be christened poets, children of God,  
For blowing sighs into the listeners' ears,  
For tugging at the moaning bells of death,  
And coming as the autumn grave-digger  
To close the eyes of flowers, and shut the fingers  
Of wind upon the rushes,  
Of music upon silence?  
Shall we be given wreathes of bay and laurel  
For forcing tragedy into a rhyme  
As a gaunt beggar in a spangled vest?  
The poet ever wanders after Death,  
The funkey on a funeral chariot  
Pouring the wine at feasts of burial;  
And all the roses that he plucks from summer  
Are carried to the crypts to deck a corpse. . . .  
How shall the world learn how to laugh again  
When all its songs have only learnt to weep?

1919

WHEN I am weary at the antic chance,  
The hobby-horses and the wooden lance,  
The hope and fear in jugglery, and see  
How starved the juggler, mean and miserly,  
And life a laboured trick—the years advance  
A shrilling chorus in affected dance  
With lust of many eyes that watch and wink  
Fixed on them; or a clown in feverish pink  
Will draw gross laughter by a hideous prance—  
Vulgarity and sin and souls askance,  
Where fiddles squeal and all the follies spin—  
Till, when the stage is empty, Harlequin  
Through curtained silence trips as from a trance  
With blushing flowers for Columbine—Romance.

1917

## MOODS

### I

I CROUCHED upon cushions and wallowed in their  
    sommolent caresses,  
And—listening with dread for the moment of my own  
    silence  
Rending the flimsy lace of whisperings—  
My gnome dances before me  
Behind a fan of smoke,  
My dwarf squats on my shoulders  
Tweeking their moulted wings,  
My ape peers in the mirror of my face  
Mimicking my soul's gaunt gestures—  
My wolf bays through my moonly loneliness  
Blotching the night with howls—  
My laughter goes whining away on the wind,  
Laughs that are whipped by a soul too sick with merriment,  
Too satiate with humour's emptiness! . . .

### II

Ah! loveliness with little pointed feet  
Dancing across the leer of ugliness,  
Skimming like a gold thread  
Through a necklace of vile masks—  
Lifting with lotus fingers  
The blue arras of nightmare—  
Loveliness like a delicate silver flute  
Pressed to a negro's lips—

### III

Do you then wish for all those griefs  
Whose snarling hands you kiss,  
Kneeling in adoration to a dagger

As saints before a cross?  
You who have tossed all flowers away,  
Coveting the drenched red peonies of blood  
Their javelin-petals wet with slaughter,—  
Do you then crave your own blood's offering,  
Your own breast's pallor pierced with knives of flame?  
In your ears are the pattering of the hunter's feet,  
Softer than death, and omens mouthed by winds of twilight,  
You lean across the precipice of time  
Calling and crying  
For the last abyssmal passion of self-slaughter—

#### IV

Waiting,  
Like grey cloud-giants climbing the hills of Heaven  
Carrying vast burdens over the crags of chaos—  
Waiting,  
Like trees that hear the far-off moan of winds,  
Like listening trees that hug their branches round them,  
Their leaves whispering lividly the rumour of storms,  
Waiting like a vast arch of quietness  
Through which a screaming messenger shall dart—  
Like a dense hood of silence  
Pierced by a sword of music—  
Waiting, like the deathly stillness of a pool  
Reflecting the diver poised before he plunges. . . .

1919



SMOKE





**N**OW is the evening dipped knee-deep in blood  
And the dun hills stand fearful in their places.  
Cunning in sin, we shuffle down the streets  
With burdens of vainglory on our backs,  
Spinning with spider-hands the miser's web  
Or sitting placid, gay and fat with ease.  
But out beyond, the armies of the world  
March doomwards to the rhythm of the drum  
Under the thirsting sun. Death holds his state:

His skeleton hands are filled with scarlet spoil:  
He stands on flaming ramparts, waving high  
The ensign of decay. All his bones are dressed  
With livid roses; all his pillars black  
Are girt in ashen poppies, and on dust  
He raises up his awful golden throne.

Oh! your fierce shrieks have fainted on deaf ears;  
Your tears have flowed on feet of carven stone;  
Your blood is spilt for the boiling-pot of God  
Where good and evil mix; and all your rage  
Is but a thin smoke wafted in His face.

**B**LOW upon blow they bruise the daylight wan,  
Scar upon scar they rend the quiet shore;  
They ride on furious, leaving every man  
Crushed like a maggot by the hoofs of war:  
Gods that grow tired of paradisial water  
And fill their cups with steaming wine of slaughter.

I fear a thing more terrible than death:  
The glamour of the battle grips us yet—  
As crowds before a fire that hold their breath  
Watching the burning houses, and forget  
All they will lose, but marvel to behold  
Its dazzling strength, the glamour of its gold.

I fear the time when slow the flame expires,  
When this kaleidoscope of roaring color  
Fades, and rage faints; and of the funeral-fires  
That shone with battle, nothing left of valour  
Save chill ignoble ashes for despair  
To strew with widowed hands upon her hair.

Livid and damp unfolds the winding-sheet,  
Hiding the mangled body of the Earth:  
The slow grey aftermath, the limping feet  
Of days that shall not know the sound of mirth,  
But pass in dry-eyed patience, with no trust  
Save to end living and be heaped with dust.

That stillness that must follow where Death trod,  
The sullen street, the empty drinking-hall,  
The tuneless voices cringing praise to God,  
Deaf gods, that did not heed the anguished call,  
Now to be soothed with humbleness and praise,  
With fawning kisses for the hand that slays.

Across the world from out the fevered ground  
Decay from every pore exhales its breath;  
A cloak of penance winding close around  
The bright desire of spring. And unto Death,  
As to a conquering king, we yield the keys  
Of Beauty's gates upon our bended knees.

The maiden loverless shall go her ways,  
And child unfathered feed on crust and husk;  
The sun that was the glory of our days  
Shining as tinsel till the moody dusk  
Into our starving outstretched arms shall lay  
Her silent sleep, the only boon we pray.

1914

A RAGGED drummer rides along the street,  
And at his coming  
The silence fills with tunes and rustling feet  
And voices humming.  
He rode a year ago from far away,  
On charger prancing,  
With bright new buttons and with ribbons gay,  
And banners dancing.  
Oh, he was fatter than the bursting drum  
He bore so proudly,  
His roaring music woke the silence dumb  
To thunder loudly.  
And by his side the old men and the young  
Had followed cheering  
Into the sunset smiling as they sung,  
Nor thought of fearing.  
They left their lovers and their mothers' lap,  
Their homes demolish,  
"For, look, I have a ribbon for my cap,  
A sword to polish!"  
And so the town was silent once again,  
Though tunes of battle  
Beat fearful in the wind, or in the rain  
Ghost drums would rattle.  
But at the chuckling dice or careful loom,  
Or candled churches  
A few forgot or prayed or followed doom  
With drunken lurches. . . .  
Now loom and bar and church disgorge the throng,  
In huddled masses  
They stand aghast to hear the drummer's song  
As back he passes—  
Palsied and drear and bent he turns alone  
In rags and tatters,  
And on a soundless barrel with a bone  
He beats and batters.

“Where march your feet so gaily, careless crowd,  
That we may kiss them?  
Where sound your little songs that rang so loud  
To us that miss them?”  
There are no songs, no happy marching feet,  
No favours flying:  
The drummer passes . . . on the quiet street  
The sun is dying.  
Sun that must bleed to death so red and brave! . . .  
Have done with weeping,  
But put your ribbons on a soldier’s grave  
As he lies sleeping.

1914

## SUDDENLY

Shutting our lips upon a jest  
 As we are sipping thoughts from little glasses,  
 A gun bursts thunder and the echoing streets  
 Quiver with startled terrors—  
 How swift runs fear: quicksilver that is free!  
 Now every muscle weakens, every pulse  
 Is set at gallop-pace and every nerve  
 Stretched taut with horror and a wild revolt. . . .  
 How sweetly spins the world to noise of music,  
 How sweet to live life's arrogant adventure!  
 Live in a vain world wracked with a thousand pangs,  
 Limp in a dull street housed with crumbling dreams,  
 To breathe and eat and sleep and love and sigh  
 A little longer, oh a little year!  
 Forgotten prayers rise up in resurrection,  
 And resolutions of new wondrous lives  
 Choke up our hearts and fling us to our knees. . . .  
 Worms creep in dreadful hunger from the ground,  
 The lurid silent people loved by death,  
 And peer into our eyes with sly forebodings  
 To drag our body's glory from the light.  
 Though all the world should fall into their cells  
 And lie within their larders shelf on shelf—  
 Yet will I toss the sheets of dust away,  
 Yet *will I* be the mistress of the sun!

I A. M.

Look how they struggle in a mist of fire,  
 Those hunchbacked chimneys and distorted domes—  
 Now gloat on Hell, the colour seems to roar,  
 An army fierce upon its own destruction,  
 A famished monster tearing in its claws  
 Gigantic foods to glut its lean desire

Digesting all the world! . . .  
Look at the eager people open-mouthed  
That stand as foolish rabbits hypnotised  
By the uncoiling rhythm of a snake,  
Their earth adoring senses caught awhile  
In the red whirlwind of ascending wings;  
Their spirits straining upward upon strings  
Like kites and air balloons, but more grotesque,  
Lacking the ephemeral beauty of a toy—  
Yet for an hour  
Dyed with the colour that their drabness fears  
They kiss the feet of beauty as she passes  
Starwards, tremendous in a coat of fire.

• • • • • 3 A. M.

The dawn seems drained of blood so colourless—  
Slowly the river moves as though in sleep  
While silent barges  
Slide from the mist like dreams;  
The intricate patterns of the scaffolding  
Are drawn against the sky  
More delicate than lace.  
All the shimmering lights  
Have shrunk away from morning  
As a blue peacock sheaves his starry tail. . . .  
I am alone, most utterly alone,  
More lonely than the last man in the world  
Straying amid the dust of vanished lives.  
More lonely than a spirit stolen from heaven  
Who stands beside that nebulous cold river  
Dividing sleep from death,  
Eternity from time. . . .  
Nothing disturbs the white peace of the dawn,  
She brings no feverous memories of night  
And sheds no tears.

Only two hours ago  
Fire walked in crimson armour through the city  
Piercing the night's black tent with glittering javelins,  
While shrieks and whispered omens flew like bats  
Among the silver foliage of the stars. . . .  
But rage has left no furrow in the sky,  
No wake of sparks across the placid water. . . .  
This is the ominous and sacred hour  
When priest-like the world kneels  
Bowed low toward the empty throne of day—  
Soon will the herald trumpet-blast be heard  
And the flamingo messengers will come  
Flocking from out the burnished cage of sunrise. . . .  
This is the hour of nothing,  
Colourless and chill  
Oblivion's hands are folded on the world,  
As sits an idol holding in his fingers  
A scentless lotus carven out of stone.

4 A. M.

Leaving the dun river with hurried tapping feet  
And up the long uncomfortable street  
With eyes uninterested yet forced to see and read  
The dingy notices once sharp and bright with greed,  
Now drear with want, that swear the Queen's Hotel  
And Brown's Hotel and King's are doing well—  
A soldier and a beggar mock me as I go,  
The light steals after me, emerging slow  
And pale from the dim alleys shadow-crouched.  
I hurried by the drunkard as he slouched  
From lamp-post unto lamp-post. . . . Then I saw  
Caught in the mirror of a tailor's door  
My own reflection as I hurried past,  
My flaring colours and my face aghast—  
The scarlet tassel of my hat that hung

Limp as a spent flame, and my skirt that clung  
About my knees and fluttered at the back:  
An injured moth, with sulphur stripes and black,  
My bag flamboyant as a pillar-box;  
My frayed gilt fringe of hair and tarnished locks.  
Jagged and crude and swift I seemed to pass  
Painted too brightly on that temperate glass.  
. . . An omnibus from sudden corner reels:  
Silence lies mangled underneath the wheels.

1915

**O** FLATTERY, imposture, battle show,  
What banners have you woven from the parted  
raiment,

What crimes from Calvary, what endless flow  
Of blood from blood, revenge, exacted payment!

How have you turned the simple truth to lies  
Made capital from creeds and missed their beauty,  
Exalted vainly with self-pitying sighs  
The wrongs enacted in the name of duty.

And ever quoting God for your excuse,  
Bribing divinity to cloak your shame,  
You train the spirit for material use,  
You sacrifice men's hearts to feed your flame.

When shall the world be rid of these bald priests,  
Pig-snouted with their gilded wolfish ears,  
The scarlet cardinals of drunken feasts  
Whose hands are washed in blood, whose feet in tears?

1916

WHAT will happen to the beggar, and the sinner, and  
the sad,  
And the drunk that drinks for sorrow, and the maimed, and  
mad;  
What will happen to the starving, and the rebel run from  
drilling,  
Cowardly, afraid of fighting, and the child who stole a  
shilling?  
They shall go to prison black  
With a striped shirt on the back,  
Feast on bread and water there  
In a cell, without a care.  
They shall learn at least their duty,  
Never tempted more of beauty—  
They shall walk in rows and praise the Lord,  
And one or two shall hang upon a cord—  
And two or three shall die of grief alone—  
(And this is well, for sinners should atone,)  
And five or six shall curse the God that made them,  
(And this is wicked, for the priests forbade them,)  
And those that grew from dust shall go to dust  
Downtrodden. Saith the preacher:—"God is just."

1917

IF I were what I would be, and could break  
The buttressed fortress of stupidity  
Where laws are sentinels, and lies the masonry,  
Surrounded with inertia, weedy lake,  
Where centuries of mud lie curdled, and the fake  
Grandeur of cardboard turrets, solemn puppetry—  
The gods are blinking at us sleepily,  
Tired of our games, the muddles that we make,  
The bloodshed, idol worshipping, the chess  
Of king, queen, castle, bishop, knight and pawn—  
The rigid squares of black and white, they dress  
With their perpetual challenge—faded, worn,  
Are all the creeds and praises you profess  
To weary gods that stretch themselves and yawn.

1917

## HOLY RUSSIA

THE ghostly blood of thee is in my veins,  
Back through the centuries of death and birth,  
Sometime I thrilled with thy gigantic pains,  
My kin lie somewhere covered with thine earth.

And ever as in dreams I seem to see  
Those streets and people with their colours cold;  
Thou hast the singing hungers of the sea,  
The tides of restless passion ages old.

I know thy humours and their contradiction,  
I know thy fevers and hallucinations,  
I see beneath the painted mask of fiction  
Thy face of fierce and weary exaltations.

And art thou come to gaze with wakened eyes  
Into the sick world's travail and her grief,  
Dost thou from thy long battling surmise  
The end of battle and the world's relief?

While we are creeping in our crooked ways  
Along the crumbling roads of worn-out creeds  
Where Ignorance walks royally through days  
That smell of death, decay and bloody deeds.

While we still cry to God for strength to kill,  
Reminding Him that Britain rules the waves,  
And grind young bones for the commercial mill,  
And build munition works among the graves.

Still crying "Honour," "Country" and "The Flag,"  
"The last heroic fight in Freedom's name!"  
Though Kings make mouths at Kings, and Prelates brag—  
They boast of murder and they reek of shame! . . .

Thou that hast touched the mystic wounds of God,  
And strewn with broken hearts the Virgin's feet,  
Feeling beneath the burden and the rod  
His justice and Her pity in the street.

Justice and Pity, crying in the wind—  
We only hear the guns that never cease,  
The flapping of our flags has made us blind!  
We may not see the sacred gods of peace.

But thou dost build fanatic temples for them,  
And thou dost pave the road with sanity,  
And all the train of bitter ghosts adore them,  
Who died to puff a monarch's vanity.

I hear thy orchestras of holy cheers,  
The drum that life has snatched away from death,  
And all the sighing rhythm of thy tears,  
And the brave laughter of thy trumpet-breath.

PEACE! But a cynic whispered in my ear  
How kings like worms still wrangled for a crown  
That lay amid the dust—and I could hear  
A hum of money-changing in the town.

I feared that afterwards, when all is won,  
We shall forget the meaning of thy deed—  
And man will creep as he has always done  
Along the little gutters of his greed.

1917

HOW deeply nurtured is your foolishness,  
Calling destruction great and slaughter brave,  
Making large triumph of a little grave,  
Imperial purple of a mourning dress,  
The gun an emblem of your godliness—  
A fluttering ribbon or a banner's wave,  
A medal or a bayonet, or rave  
Of singing, marching in the forward press  
Of hatred to the banging of a band;  
Your country's honour and the world's release.  
Are *they* not strong in courage who withstand  
The armies of your folly and shall cease  
To tarnish with spilt life their motherland?  
Cowards—or martyrs—crucified for peace.

1917

Of all who died in silence far away  
Where sympathy was busy with other things,  
Busy with worlds, inventing how to slay,  
Troubled with rights and wrongs and governments and  
kings.

The little dead who knew so large a love,  
Whose lives were sweet unto themselves a shepherding  
Of hopes, ambitions, wonders in a drove  
Over the hills of time, that now are graves for burying.

Of all the tenderness that flowed to them,  
A milky way streaming from out their mother's breast,  
Stars were they to her night, and she the stem  
From which they flowered—now barren and left unblessed.

Of all the sparkling kisses that they gave  
Spangling a secret radiance on adoring hands,  
Now stifled in the darkness of a grave  
With kiss of loneliness and death's embracing bands.

No more!—And we, the mourners, dare not wear  
The black that folds our hearts in secrecy of pain,  
But must don purple and bright standards bear,  
Vermilion of our honour, a bloody train.

We dare not weep who must be brave in battle—  
“Another death—another day—another inch of land—  
The dead are cheering and the ghost drums rattle” . . .  
The dead are deaf and dumb and cannot understand. . . .

Of all who died in darkness far away  
Nothing is left of them but LOVE, who triumphs now,  
His arms held crosswise to the budding day,  
The passion-red roses clustering his brow.

AND afterwards, when honour has made good,  
And all you think you fight for shall take place,  
A late rejoicing to a crippled race;  
The bulldog's teeth relax and snap for food,  
The eagles fly to their forsaken brood,  
Within the ravaged nest. When no disgrace  
Shall spread a blush across the haggard face  
Of anxious Pride, already flushed with blood.

In victory will you have conquered Hate,  
And stuck old Folly with a bayonet  
And battered down the hideous prison gate?  
Or will the fatted gods be gloried yet,  
Glutted with gold and dust and empty state,  
The incense of our anguish and our sweat?

1917

PITY the slain that laid away their lives,  
Pity the prisoners mangled with gyves,  
Thin little children and widowed wives,  
And the broken soldier who survives.

Pity the woman whose body was sold  
For a little bread or a little gold,  
And a little fire to keep out the cold,  
So tired, and fearful of growing old.

Pity the people in the grey street  
Before the dawn trooping with listless feet  
Down to their work in the dust and the heat,  
For a little bread and a little meat.

Pity the criminal sentenced to die,  
Loving life so, with the world in his eye,  
In his ears and his heart, with the passionate cry  
Of love that will call when he may not reply.

Pity them all, the imperative faces  
That peer through the dark where we sleep in our laces,  
Where we skulk among cushions in opulent places,  
With indolent postures and frivolous graces.

Eyes that prick the darkness, fingers thin  
Tearing at hypocrisy, and Sin  
That batters the door and staggers in. . . .  
The streets surround with clamour and din,

Drowning our flutes, till the cries of the city  
Flurry us, flutter us, force us to pity,  
Force us to sigh and arrange a committee,  
Tea-party charity danced to a ditty. . . .

The scarlet ribbons flutter and wave,  
A rebel flag on a rebel grave,  
But to us the strong alone are brave,  
And only the rich are worthy to save!

Yet who shall blame us, plaited and curled,  
Where silk banners fly and the red flags are furled,  
Flags that blow where the dead are hurled,  
Tattered and dripping with blood of the world!

1918



FLAME





YOU have understood so little of me, and my adoration  
That shone upon my forehead, like a crown of curious  
stones,

You turned into a cap and bells for Folly's coronation  
And made a foolish tinkling from my laughter and my  
moans.

You have led me through the market like an ass upon the  
halter,

You have fed me upon thistles; I was driven by the crowd;  
But my faith in what I am, my conceit, you cannot alter;  
I was proud in pomp and purple, as a clown I leave you  
proud!

A greater pride than sits upon a throne for mere adorning,  
A fiercer strength than in the gods of wood that cannot  
bow;

I tore my purple into rags and knelt to bear your scorn-  
ing,

And I am rebel leader to a band of beggars now.

In the twilight of my love I stand and strew the bitter  
ashes;

They are blown into my eyes again, the fires that shone for  
you;

In the blushing of the sunset their ghostly fervour flashes  
As they sink for everlasting in the darkness and the dew.

Your heart is as a moonstone hieroglyphed with secret  
letters;

You have never read my passion, as I never learnt their  
sign,

But I praise your haunting beauty and I bear the bruise of  
fetters

And I reel from your remembrance as I spill the ancient  
wine.

All those women I have envied with their pink and foolish  
faces,  
Moths that have out-distanced me in circling round your  
head,  
For the strangeness of your kisses and the curse of your  
embraces  
And the frenzy of pursuing where your despot feet have led.

I will shout, and tear the darkness; I will snuff the candles  
sacred  
With the rage of my abasement, with the blast of my fare-  
well;  
I will smile with cynic softness, but my tears are dropping  
acrid  
And sizzling in a gutter down the white-hot streets of Hell!

1914

ULLED are the dazzling colours of the day,  
And mild the heavens, burnt out like an ash.  
Hungry and strange along the shadowed dusk  
Walks Melancholy, and with bitter mouth  
Sucks the last juices from the sun's ripe fruit.  
Now can I sing the sickly lines of love  
And of love's failure, spell my sorrows out  
In the sad spaces of the gloaming night,  
And stooping, huddled, hide me in the dark.  
My words were fireless in the flaming sun,  
And all the throats of flowers from their content  
Puffed back my pinings proudly in my face  
And bade me give them tunes to make them dance. . . .  
Lean, hungry, like my love the moon looks down  
From the white solitudes of Heaven. All aghast  
And sterile as the arms of my desire  
She flings her light despairing on the sky.  
The night is strange and still, for dropping tears,  
Or burying hatred in a deep-dug grave.

1914

WASHED at my feet by the curded foam of sluggish waves,  
As the rain splinters and the mud gleams with malicious light,  
Like a frail shell, million tinged and quaintly wrought  
The thought of you, which held against mine ear  
Hums all the echoed melodies of your soul;  
The sigh of wearied life, the ebbing sweet of love,  
The little tunes of wine mixed with the chants of death,  
The following of beauty's fugitive limbs  
Whose classic feet, and rapturous pale breast  
Gleam on the clouds and foam,  
Call to her lovers.—  
Thus standing in the blasting of the wind,  
And numb with ceaseless drip of moments from the cloud  
Of lowering hours, I toy with this strange relic of the sea,  
Turned with such perfectness from her tumultuous wheels,  
Thoughts of you million tinged and quaintly wrought.

1916

MY poems cannot laugh. They are the voice  
Of birds that mourn and cry above the sea,  
And this wild joy my love has brought to me  
Lies dumb and knows not how it shall rejoice.

I am most weary of the petulant songs I sing,  
Most tired of tunes that only learn to weep,  
And long to turn my dreams from their pale sleep  
Into a gentle minstrelsy with harp of silver string;

To fashion for my love one perfect verse  
Symmetrically threaded by beauty word on word,  
Flowing and flashing like the luted laughter of a bird  
To bless the soul with music which I ravished with a curse.

But as a coward in the general gloom  
I mimic fortune with my tunes of ill,  
Nor pipe despite her wistful mirth and trill  
Of love that moves with music into Doom;

Of love that thrills with joy the graveyard cold,  
And like a gay canary in a cage  
Mocks at his prison, and with flippant rage  
Flaunts his bright wing to fill the gloom with gold.

1916

ON the hill there is a tavern, long-loved, well-remembered,  
Where all the sleepy afternoon the little tables dream,  
And the cool green bottles ranged, laugh and gleam with  
golden highlights,  
And the waiters wrangle, and the flies, with murmurs  
merged and mixed.  
We will go there, you and I, to wake the nodding content-  
ment,  
And toast our fancies reverently with red wine and with  
white wine,  
And with eyes mesmerised to the horizon gazing,  
Dream our iridescent dreams and sigh our shadowy sighs.

1916

O H canst thou not hear in my heart all its whispering fears  
Whose wind-like voices  
Flutter the leaves of my hope and bow them with tears  
While the body rejoices.  
Till all the pomp and beauty of day, the Cardinal Sun  
Trailing his scarlet vesture  
Leaves after light the pale hills sullen and dun,  
Turns with a gesture  
Colour and glory to smoke that is deathly and grey.  
I follow the shadows of sorrow  
That press so close to the dancing heels of the day  
And darken the morrow.  
The world turns pale and cold, for I seem to see  
Beyond its golden visor  
The leering skull that derides at our lives and me  
Being older than life and wiser. . . .  
I hear the cry of the world that writhes to the lash of the  
whip  
Beyond the sound of the treetops singing  
To the wind's persuasive violins and bells of dews that drip,  
Or rush of feathers winging. . . .  
Dost thou fear death as I? Ah no, but thy lips are against  
my cheek  
Murmuring tenderly  
The perfumed lies stolen from spring that wistfully through  
the bleak  
Windows of frost so slenderly  
Steals her little ghost's flute. Thou tellest of things that  
might be  
If life were as kind as a lover,  
If we were beloved of the world and the world of we.  
Thy white words hover  
Dove-like in rose leaf evenings over the nest  
Silvering heaven  
With rustle of lovers that nestle together for rest.  
If I could have given

My tired lips to kisses and my body to sleep and to thee,  
Ah then and then only  
The dust were as gentleness mingling thy beauty with me  
And death were not lonely.

1916

**A**S in the silence the clear moonlight drips  
Among the fields that love her drowsily,  
These passionate moments trickle on through time,  
From soul to languorous soul.  
Like mad musicians upon fretted harps,  
The senses play upon the poignant nerves,—  
And colours clothe our mood  
As smoke against the light, as shimmering prisms  
Irised with pallors of an opal's heart  
In which the glittered pattern of desire  
Smoulders and changes. . . .  
O love, thou nightingale-throated singer,  
Thread on thy jewelled chords from start to star  
And keep thy silver delicate delight  
Out of the flush and lustre that makes mad.  
Let thy fairy feet  
Go tripping down a scarcely scented path,  
Between an avenue of breathless flowers.  
The hours glide by as swans across a lake,  
Across the luminous waters of desire,  
And beat as wings the rustle of soft words,  
As love bends down,  
Breathing his adoration on a fainting mouth.

1917

**I**CAN but give thee unsubstantial things  
Wrapt as in rose-leaves between thought and thought,  
No gems or garments marvellously wrought  
On ivory spools with rare embroiderings.  
Nor for thy fingers precious, fabled rings  
That cardinals have worn, and queens have bought  
With blood and beauty. I have only sought  
A song that hovers on illusive wings.

Accept from me a dream that hath no art,  
I give my empty hands for thee to hold,  
Take thou the gift of silence for my part,  
With all the deeper things I have not told.  
Yet if thou canst, decipher in my heart  
Its passions writ in hieroglyphs of gold.

1917

# I

I HAVE no other friend but thee,  
But while I tell thee all my thought  
Thine ears are buzzing with gossip of dreams,  
Soothsayings and sighs, and little things—  
How canst thou listen to me?

# II

Perchance I roamed under the old moon too long,  
And when my cheek grew pale  
I laid it against thine to feel the blood beat back  
Responsive in the double rose of joy—  
But I feel thee shifting away into loneliness  
Where the ghost moon glides between us. . . .

# III

When at a masquerade  
I meet thee in the shrill indifferent throng,  
Our faces painted each in some disguise  
Of varnished revelry;  
I whisper in thine ear  
Fables, and flatteries, and inconsequent tales,  
Trivial as the dust that whirls about our feet,  
And shower the multicoloured streamers high  
Where Folly is king of midnight—  
Suddenly dost thou snatch thy mask aside,  
And thy still face looks out,  
Weary and overwise  
Where the mad pretence avails not.

# IV

Long ago we walked together in a garden;  
It was evening and the leaves fell down;

Silently we passed over the dead, the fallen,  
Over flowers and branches that were withered there—  
And the air was weary with the scent of other days,  
A fragrance faint and pensive.  
The sighing of the leaves beneath our feet  
Were as old dreams retold,  
Stirred from the golden quilt of memory,  
And farewells rang their whispering bells,  
Tolling the days away.  
But peace lay folded between our hands  
As we thought of the vanishing years  
And of love dying in the arms of love.

## V

Sometimes I look into the glass  
And see my face without the conquering light  
That gave me glamour when I gave thee love.  
Fain would I bathe in the fountains of beauty,  
To glitter with the crystals of her sparkling desire,  
And touch with my feet the floors of a bright paven Hell,  
And rear my head among the lilies of Heaven.  
I would be for thee  
As a ring of white flowers on the sward,  
As a red fire playing to thy breath,  
As a flock of kingfishers  
Surprised from the dark fringe of rushes!  
Remember only this,  
My will toward all loveliness, and look  
Deep in thyself for my reflected soul.

## VI

Be perfect—for I love thee more in thought  
Than thou canst reach in every trivial day.  
Since days are as the flowers on a wreath

That wither while we bind them each to each.  
Only the soul is timeless, and no round of days  
Can wall it in a little space of ground.  
Sometimes our minds are cheated by the clock  
And crave love, wisdom, joy within an hour,  
But the patient spirit stands  
Waiting the last fulfilment.  
Around thy soul my thoughts are as garlands  
Or as an endless rosary.  
Be perfect! lest my psalm should falter  
And my hands part from the unriveted faith  
With Amen scarcely sighed.

1917

**B**ODIES heaving like waves,  
Sighing through the dishevelled tresses of foam,  
The massive whiteness of limbs flung out of shadow,  
Splashed with ecstasial moonlight,  
Sculptured voluptuously in ephemeral marbles.  
Lingering touch of fingers,  
Cooler than the curving ringlets of spray  
Fluting the new-blown petals of a shell,  
And kisses murmuring as the lips of darkness  
Against the ivory forehead of the moon.

1919

YOUR face to me is like a beautiful city  
Dreaming forever by the rough wild sea,  
And I the ship upon a wilderness of waves  
Heavily laden with memories. . . .  
I roam over all the earth  
Making rhymes of you, and singing songs,  
Because your face will never let me rest,  
Because I can not frame it in a star  
Surrounded with my cloudy reveries,  
Because I may not pluck it like a flower  
To breathe the incense of its perfumed soul—  
Your face is like the carved hilt of a sword  
Whose sheath is in my breast!

1918

OH! why will you not let me love you  
Well enough?  
You have plucked my blossoms,  
Gathered the leaves  
And revived them with water;  
But all the tortuous roots  
Delving for your spirit  
In subterranean passions  
With a blind unresting desire,  
Have you felt them, have you known?  
In the blackest night of sleep  
Though I be sunk a thousand fathoms  
In the cerulean depths of slow oblivion,  
My soul still swims toward you  
Against the envious pressure of the tide. . . .  
You who are so tired, so filled with sleep  
That you would brush a rose-leaf from your cheek  
Lest its heaviness should stir your rest,  
How can you shoulder the weight of my great burden  
That is too vast for me to bear alone?  
I tell you  
Love is no little thing,  
No moth-winged Cupid painted on the air,  
No thin flute music petaling the silence  
As leaves that flutter from a cherry tree.  
It is the thought that broods upon its death,  
The dread of mountains looking to the storm  
Ere shrieks of lightning cleave their breasts in twain.  
It is the fire that pillars up the stars  
To mix its flame with their eternal gold.  
Oh, listen to me!  
You shall hear my message sung from sphere to sphere  
As star-dust pouring a path through Heaven.  
You shall know me  
In the pensive shadows of trees,  
In the luminary phantoms

Reflected in the stillness of a lake;  
In the arrows of sunlight shot through meshing leaves  
And quivering in the moss;  
In the abandoned play of breakers  
Showering their crystals to the moon;  
In the folly of rainbow dolphins.  
I only ask of you  
To be the diver in my deepest pool,  
To bring from out its blue obscurity  
The things my life has moulded unaware,  
Treasures my passion and my hunger fashioned  
In loneliness of prayer unlit by life,  
Created out of nothing save myself  
Within the blind fast silence of the soul.

1918

MY devotion kneels to you,  
Holding a candle to illumine your face.  
My loneliness is your shadow  
Along the solitary roads.  
My passion is a book between your hands  
Whose leaves are as the leaves of violets,  
A volume of pressed flowers  
Scenting your fingers though you read it not.  
And my white faith  
Is a silken surplice clothing you in peace.

1919

## ISLANDS

**A**S launched upon the loneliness of time  
We float and dream of what the waves conceal,  
Each like a thought that rolls with rapid zeal  
Succeeded by a breaker of fierce crime,  
Or curling passion, or a rhythm of rhyme,  
Or indolent ripple sighing at the keel—  
Beyond us, though our fretted longings reel,  
The lulled horizon sleeps, the still hours climb—  
So toss our weary ships, till from afar  
Our visioned island rises suddenly,  
Where palaces like cloudy colours are,  
With scented gardens terraced to the sea,  
The silver steps to our appointed star  
Where gleam the spires that pierce eternity.

1917

MANY things I'd find to charm you,  
Books and scarves and silken socks,  
All the seven rainbow colours  
Black and white with 'broidered clocks.  
Then a stick of polished whalebone  
And a coat of tawny fur,  
And a row of gleaming bottles  
Filled with rose-water and myrrh.  
Rarest brandy of the 'fifties,  
Old liqueurs in leather kegs,  
Golden Sauterne, copper sherry  
And a nest of plover's eggs.  
Toys of tortoise-shell and jasper,  
Little boxes cut in jade;  
Handkerchiefs of finest cambric,  
Damask cloths and dim brocade.  
Six musicians of the Magyar,  
Madness making harmony;  
And a bed austere and narrow  
With a quilt from Barbary.  
You shall have a bath of amber,  
A Venetian looking-glass,  
And a crimson-chested parrot  
On a lawn of terraced grass.  
Then a small Tanagra statue  
Found anew in ruins old,  
Or an azure plate from Persia,  
Or my hair in plaits of gold;  
Or my scalp that like an Indian  
You shall carry for a purse,  
Or my spilt blood in a goblet . . .  
Or a volume of my verse.

1916

## LAMPLIGHT AND STARLIGHT





## LAMP-POSTS

THE eternal flame of laughter and desire  
Breaks the long darkness with a little glance,  
Till all the gloom is radiant in a dance  
Of yellow hopefulness, reflecting fire  
That dreams from Heaven's lamps as we aspire  
Sadly toward their jubilance—Romance  
Of faery glitter in the streets of chance—  
Those beacon-trees that blossom from the mire  
Within the fog of our despairing gloom;  
In the glum alleys, down the haunted night  
Through tunnelling of subterranean doom,  
Among the grovelling shadows, kingly bright,  
They bear their coronets of golden bloom  
To front our anguish with their brave delight.

1917

## LONDON

**R**ICHER than fields of corn that fire in summer,  
Strange as the moon on forest rising sudden,  
More fearful and beloved than peace or silence,  
Heart with my heart at pace in throbbing fever,  
Calling towards me with a voice incessant.

Thou that begot me: From whose streets triumphant  
I, coloured fiercely with thy passion, wakened!  
I sucked red wine, not milk, from thy gaunt bosom,  
My senses in thy fearfulness found beauty,  
And honey in thine oaths and lamentations.  
I played about thy feet that know not resting  
And bathed me in the sweat of thine endeavour.

When on thy gala-nights the thronged lamps glitter,  
Sparkle like sequins, and the plumes of shadow  
With curling smoke, with rain and rippling gutter  
Are tossed in feathered gaiety about thee—  
Thick grow the crowded streets in coloured pageant,  
Kaleidoscope of people, circling, crossing,  
Till the brain frenzies to a thousand patterns,  
While the ears buzz with noises of their laughter;  
Shouts hoarse and coarse and shrill in one great roaring,  
As of the angry ocean in her travail . . .  
They haunt me in the tranquil of the forest,  
Those faces pain has marked and toil has mangled;  
Pangs greater than the lonely Crucifixion  
Here crucified each day with lust and hunger,  
Hung up unlovely in the open market;  
Made gay with paper garlands, covered over  
With tinsel loin cloth, painted like a puppet,  
Lest the elect in passing should be startled,  
Lest they should smear the blameless brow of honour!  
With bloody shoes and spinning-wheels of traffic  
Vermilion-splashed, the city rushes onward,  
And thorns of death and lust and fruitless labour

Lie underneath the feet forever dancing.  
Gay tunes are rasped upon a weary fiddle,  
Or voice of moaning in the tinkling cymbal,  
Offspring of humour from disaster's bowels.  
I love the bitter and the rude, the drunken,  
The tramps and thieves that skulk among the shadows;  
The faces red as fire and dead as ashes,  
A million faces scattered like confetti,  
All changing, whirling, trodden into nothing.  
There Beauty wanders strange, an-hungered, weary,  
Throned on a dust-heap, or triumphant reeling  
In mad disorder from the couch of chaos.

O ragged Beauty, through the mournful houses,  
How frail the feet that lead the dawn towards us,  
Blushed in the sunrise with a great ambition,  
Spent in the evening like a rose of fever,  
Fainting before us paler than a lily.  
While here each day self-satisfied and placid  
Moves opulent among the groves of summer;  
The larks delight, the laughter of the thrushes,  
The kindly peasants in their ruddy orchard,  
Please for a while until the spirit sickens  
And turns her panting to her ancient lover.

Oh, well I know the quickening of the pulses,  
Joy bursting through disgust as field and pasture  
Grow fewer, paler, till the eager houses  
Like hungry animals eat up the spaces  
And close upon the miles that God created,  
With triumph of man's greed. As warriors listening  
To the far rhythm in the drums of battle,  
As seamen hear the mighty tide-wave bursting,  
I feel the scamper of your feet approaching  
And your great starving arms and strangling fingers  
That drag me back to my perverted Heaven!

**S**LOWLY the pale feet of morning  
Tread out the ashes of midnight still burning with feverous lamplight,  
Colourless, cold, as the rainclad  
Sleep-druggèd river that carries the wreckage of cities out  
sea-ward.  
Slowly the fingers of dawn-light  
Snuff out the candles that yearned to those Gods of delirium,  
Sleep-huge as shadows grimacing  
From niches made black with the smoke of a fire-spangled  
passion.  
Smoothly the wild hair of darkness  
Is plaited for rest, and the faces of visions are covered with  
sleep veils.  
Patiently, Morning, the priestess  
Drones out a psalm for the souls that we damned in the  
blackness,  
Gashed with the daggers of street-lights,  
Crushing the poisonous berries of sinister kisses,—  
Morning with healing and kindness  
Folds up the dresses dishevelled with terror and laughter,  
Sweeps up the rags of our shadows  
That danced in a red smoke of dreams on the walls of  
oblivion.

WHAT have I to do with them,  
The red athletes in their snow-white clothes?  
They are sun lovers and moon haters,  
Toiling or playing in the fields  
Whereon no shadows lie,  
Pensively, whispering together—  
They are space lovers and haters of the stars,  
Soundly they sleep by night nor ever see  
The tiaraed brows of darkness.  
I weary of their striving upward and onward,  
Away from the green hush of twilight,  
Where silence drips from the trees,  
Away from the solemn avenues  
Where the ghosts blow by  
Along with a drift of leaves.

Let us linger awhile  
Far away from the frets and wars of the world,  
From the strong men  
With their strident hymning voices and marching feet—  
Let us walk alone  
For the love of our own shadows  
Stretching their length on lawns of powdered silver,  
With behind us the sky's grey curtain  
Drawn backward from the moon. . . .  
Let us sit by the fireside  
And hear the wind's shrill orchestras,  
Fiddle and fife and flute,  
And omened bagpipe screaming. . . .  
Let us lie abed and dream  
Through the long summer's morning  
Of trivial things, and beautiful. . . .  
Let us dance with Folly when midnight knocks on his  
golden gong;  
Let us run through pools of wine  
And be splashed with purple.

Let us, being sick, make merry,  
And rejoice when we are weary.  
Let us sit by our grave as at a banquet,  
Drinking to Death.

What have we to do with them,  
Sons of the sun and the soil,  
Daughters of the hearth and the field?  
They that remake the world  
Melting our idols for silver,  
Our goblets for gold;  
Tearing our temples down  
To build their red brick villages.

The doomed world faints into mist,  
World of our indolence and dreams,  
And the faces and bodies we love  
Sink through oblivion, and are seen  
Dimly, as divers through the waters.  
Old worlds and new worlds!  
Let us slip between them,  
And float on the stream that floweth nowhither—  
Our red ambitions burn  
To a blue smoke of forgetting;  
Our moonshine faints on the tide that goeth out,  
As the sun leers to the tide that cometh in.

1918

**A**MONG the crumbling arches of decay  
Where all around the red new buildings crept,  
Where huge machines had rolled the past away,  
And the dead princes lay accursed and slept;

Among the ruins I beheld a man  
Who heeded not the engines as they neared,  
Painting dead carnivals upon a fan,  
He smiled and trifled with his pointed beard.

And here and there were flung a mess of things,  
Tokens and fripperies and faded dresses,  
Kept from the courtships of a thousand kings,  
Tossed roses for the tossing of caresses.

A carven sabre hung upon the wall,  
A toy thing, with no rust of blood upon it,  
A tray of glasses, an embroidered shawl,  
A muff, a bottle and a feathered bonnet.

And mirrors flashed their argent memories  
Out of the shadows where they laughed and gleamed,  
While ghostly faces of past vanities  
Come back to dream there where they once had dreamed.

The stranger turned his head and bowed to me  
And waved me vaguely to a gilded chair.  
I spoke: "You are a connoisseur, I see,  
You really have a fine collection there."

He bowed to me again, and in his hand  
Dangled a string of gems, they caught my eye  
With beckoning lights—I could not understand—  
His fingers seemed to touch them like a sigh

So much he loved their frail inconsequence.  
I spoke of progress conquering decay,  
And tired the stillness with my common sense  
Loud-spoken in the jargon of the day.

But I have never met so queer a man,  
"I better love my memories," he said,  
"Look at those painted figures on the fan,  
How delicate and wistful are the dead."

1917

**A**S a nun's face from her black draperies  
So full of mystery the moon looks down.  
She dreams of a passion that shall outlive time,  
Of Beauty's face beheld unveiled and close,  
Of God Who blows the worlds like bubbles up,  
Smiling away, to watch them swell and die.  
She dreams of music played among the stars  
When the slow tongues of silence are unloosed.  
Above the city glittering giddily,  
Above the jostling heads of man she moves,  
Strange as a dreamer walking in her sleep.

1912

THE sun is lord of life and colour,  
Blood of the rose and hyacinth,  
Hair of the sea and forests,  
Crown of the cornfields,  
Body of the hills.  
The moon is the harlot of Death,  
Slaughterer of the Sun,  
Priestess and poisoner she goes  
With all her silver flock of wandering souls,  
Her chant of wailing waters,  
The bed of shimmering dust from which she comes  
Bound all around with bandages of mist. . . .  
The living are as blossoms and fruit on the tree,  
The dead are as lilies and wind on the marshes;  
The living are as cherries that bow to the morning  
Beckoning to the loitering stranger,  
The wind, to sing them his eerie ballads.  
The dead are as frozen skeleton branches  
Whereon the stillness perches like an owl. . . .  
The dead are as snows on the cherry orchard.

1918

## BAHAMA ISLANDS

### I

ALL down the somnolent street where pale tinged houses  
dream  
The negroes go, black faces crowding together;  
And between the palm leaves dancing with lethargic ges-  
tures,  
The bright long water spreads, green as a parrot's wing—  
We have rest here and a monotony of wheels,  
A peaceful noise like bees that moan in June—  
And the sun rusts not, but his brazen heraldries  
Tarnished with evening are burnished with the dawn.  
Yet pain comes stabbing in the night with silver knife  
through the window,  
A blanched moon full of fear and the burden of desire—  
And nothing rids us utterly of grief,  
We who have pilgrim souls that will not sleep.

### II

Moonlight planting the world with lilies, so hushed it seems  
and scented,  
But in the chapel is a droning where the negroes chant their  
hymns  
And we in aureoled loneliness go down the street contented,  
With hearts that beat for pleasure to the rhythm of our  
limbs.

1917

## THOUGHTS OF LONDON

O H, have I bartered and forgotten thee,  
Selling thy tarnished twilights for gold sun,  
Relinquishing thy dreams that used to run  
A ragged troop along thy streets with me?  
Cast off the glitter of thy jewelry,  
Thy lamp-light, starlight, colours crudely spun,  
The eloquent ugliness, the roofs of dun,  
The fogs that swathe in bands of mystery?  
Mother of dreams and laughter and despair!  
Thy joy my Heaven is, my Hell thy pain,  
Thy labyrinthian streets wind everywhere,  
Thy sins and passions baffle me again;  
And all my hopes thy lamps that flick and glare,  
And all my griefs thy beggars in the rain.

1918

## STREETS

I AM going

Up and down the roads and alleys  
Through the forests of the city,  
Hunting thoughts, hunting dreams.  
My mind shall wander through the streets  
Whistling to a vague adventure,  
Plucking strange fancies where they lurk and peer  
And casting them away.  
Dusk is creeping through the town  
Lighting the lamps and loitering,  
Leaving smoky clouds of shadow,  
Hovering clouds of peace;  
And behind her race the winds  
Whining to the scent of darkness,  
Scattering the dust  
With their swift hounds' feet. . . .  
I am a hunter in the city's jungle,  
Exploring all her secret mysteries.  
I know her well,  
The moaning highways,  
And whispering alleys,  
The chimney-dishevelled roofs  
Where the moon walks delicately  
As a stray spectral cat;  
The little forlorn squares  
Where one tree stands  
Drooping bedraggled hair and fingers  
Over the benches where the people sit  
And stir not from their sullen postures,  
Staring out where evening passes  
With such a sauntering dreamy step.  
I know her parks that spring had decked with garlands,  
Fluttered with flags and child imaginings,  
Powdered with blossoms exquisite and shy,

Haunted with lovers and their last year's ghosts.  
Now stripped with autumn, as the ragpicker  
Wrapped in his tattered coat emaciate  
Picks up the littered wreck of holiday  
To mount the dust heap where our memories lie  
Sprawled in a mess of ruins. . . .  
I know her monotone of gloomy mansions,  
Repeating each in each a dull despair,  
Indifferent and dignified;  
Those tarnished prisons lined with white and gold,  
With dismal silences of velvet carpets,  
Where starving souls are kept  
Feeding upon each other's isolations,  
Not daring to escape. . . .  
Some roads seem steep as mountains, weary me  
With their crude temples built in praise of lust,  
Squatting and smiling at some hideous dream  
Of fat bejewelled goddesses, or gods  
Frock-coated, undismayed by prayers and tears,  
Their hats atilt like halos on their heads. . . .

I love the ribald multi-coloured crowd,  
Its radiant loves, and laughters, all the faces  
That are as songs, as flowers, as hovering stardust. . . .  
I love the memory-crusted taverns  
In which my heart has leapt to a fiddler's tune  
Until the dawn,  
Like a white minstrel stopped to sing  
Fantastic serenades, and called me forth  
Where through the crystal chandeliers of morning  
Dew-prismed shone the sun. . . .  
I love the narrow streets whose crippled houses  
Are bathed in vitriol twilights,  
Spitting smoke,  
Or making oaths and mouths at one another. . . .  
While between

The flaring tinsel lights of shop and window  
Are gaps of goblin darkness passaging  
Into Cimmerian depths of mystery and sin. . . .  
Wan children stare at me, and in their eyes  
I see the flickering pallor of the lamps,  
Reflective of the solitude of stars. . . .  
And I am thrilled  
With horror and the hope for tragedies. . . .

But, they surround my heart these weary streets,  
Yea, in my soul they cut their mournful paths,  
And through them pass forever  
Those shadow figures trudging through the grey  
Like penitent souls through haunted corridors. . . .  
Ah, Grief, thou wanderer,  
Thou maker of music, lingering and sweet!  
Here dost thou pause to play thy shrill faint tunes,  
Thy fingers touch the stops to loose our tears,  
And shake our hearts, and fold our hands in prayer.  
Through all the winding mazes of the city  
Thy stooping shoulders and thy pitiful face are seen,  
And thou dost stand before the gate of brass,  
And by the iron door,  
Under the windows where we sit and wait  
For some sweet promise to unfold itself  
From the shut scrolls of sleep,  
And at the dusty curtain that divides  
Glory from Death,  
And lover from the lover. . . .

Now in my room I sit  
And round me falls the darkness  
In rustling folds of peace.  
But round my heart I know  
No scarves of sleep and silence can be bound  
To shut the city out.

For I shall feel the rush of streets  
Shooting inquisitive fingers into chaos,  
Piercing the night's remote divinity.  
And I shall never rid me of these scars  
That time and man have cut into my thought,  
Never shake off my shoulders  
The burden of the city's pain.  
Oh, never shall we escape thee,  
Mother of mutiny and want,  
Thou beautiful mistress of Grief . . .  
Oh, never shall we escape thy insomnia nights  
Beating with ineloquent hands  
The tambourines of time,  
The drums of war;  
Fevering our minds  
With the swollen traffic of thoughts,  
The wheels and rattle of an endless search. . . .

Tired I am with wandering,  
Pricked with the lights and jostled by the worlds,  
More jaded than the Moon, more hopeless, grey,  
Than that sad pilgrim lost amid the stars! . . .

1918

**L**AUGHTER and singing come with the morning,  
When Life doth mask his face with a gilded visor,  
And dons his arrogant clothes.  
But in the night,  
When the unsheathed moon stands naked and pale,  
We too put off our opulent disguise  
And stand alone in the baffling darkness,  
Fighting with our sins,  
Weeping for our loneliness,  
That moon-like gropes forever through the desolate air.

1918

IN the night I hear my loneliness calling  
The long shrill note of the seabird's cry  
Over the fuming spite of breakers,  
Over the brumous, sulky tides.  
All the ocean is craving Heavenward,  
And the wild sky crushes downward toward the sea,  
Where the clouds stoop their passionate bodies,  
And the waves rear their supplianting hands.  
Mine eyes grow tired of looking outward forever,  
Away from the firelight and my sleeping idols,  
To where the darkness is shattered with gusts of white,  
Wings of ship, and bird, and cloud, and wave,  
Flashing their signals of unrest.—  
My longing is a warm thing in a cold street,  
Taking refuge by the chinks of lighted doors—  
My longing is a pale ghost stepping into the sunlight  
That falls in golden curtains sumptuous and hushed—  
My longing is a fiddler making a thin tune through the  
silence,  
Through the heavy pauses of sleep.—  
Ah! Stop up my ears lest I hear my longing call,  
Lest I hear my loneliness crying!

1918

## SUNDAY

HOW beautiful is the world's delight,  
How trivial, yet as sweet as a passing dream  
That makes the harassed sleeper in the night  
Smile, and on waking sigh. Forever the stream  
Of time moves onward; as in coloured boats  
A thousand souls go sailing,  
And stilly down the tide my spirit floats  
Singing or wailing  
To the tune the waters make. Here we forget a space  
The crawling sins of man that sting and gloat,  
The pain and fear that haggers every face,  
But vaguely and remote  
The strident trumpet and the clamorous voices sound—  
Grief doth forget to curse her Gods or pray,  
While pagan follies squander all around  
Their brief gay hours in holiday;  
For all prayers die when laughter is on the lips.—  
How frail the moods of joy, how sweet to see them pass  
Like bubbles on the tide, like coloured ships  
Sailing on glass!

1918

THE leaves are singing, and the sea,  
And the sand in the wind,  
Blown grass and hurrying people;  
Full of melodious strings and lutes and flutes  
Rustling and whispering forever.  
The sad music of Life is in my ears,  
Never ceasing, never asleep,  
And my heart is strung between chord and chord  
Like a crucifix in a rosary.

1918

**H**OW soundly sleepeth the fool,  
With profane snore taunting the solemn-pillared  
night—

He hath no dreams of restless, subtle forms  
That shift across a feverish vacancy;  
Nor doth he hear the drums of time  
Beating against oblivion tunes of war,  
Goading the crippled hours on their endless march—  
But waketh to yawn in the face of the sun,  
Then turneth back to sleep. . . .

How soundly the wise man sleepeth,  
Couched royally in the purple of the dark  
With his white mistress, Peace—  
And when the morning stealeth on his rest,  
As a rose he doth pluck her from the spreading tree of days,  
And reviveth his heart  
With the perfume of the world. . . .  
But 'twixt the wise and the foolish  
Many nights shed sorrow and fear,  
And nets are spread for timid feet,  
And the waves beat on the shifting sand. . . .

1918

MOONLIT lilacs under the window,  
And the pale smell of their falling blossoms,  
And the white floating beams like luminous moths  
Fluttering from bloom to bloom.  
Sprays of lilac flowers  
Frothing at the green verge of midnight waves,  
Frozen to motionless icicles.  
Moonlight flows over me,  
Spreads her bright watery hair over my face,  
Full of illicit, marvellous perfumes  
Wreathed with syringa and plaited with hyacinths;  
Hair of the moonlight falling about me,  
Straight and cool as the drooping tresses of rain.

1918

OLD woman forever sitting  
Alone in the large hotel under the fans,  
Infinitely alone where around you spin  
So many lives like painted tops,  
Smearing the void a moment with their hues,  
Giddily catching at balance as they pause.  
What crime was yours, old woman,  
What sin against the Earth  
That she should give you now  
A cap of dust and furrows on your cheeks,  
And at the end  
A hole dug in the mould?  
Is death the promise of Fate's last rebound,  
Revenge of Time that waits within the clock  
And laughs awry at life,  
For a kiss, for a dream, for a child that you bore,  
For a fresh rose pinned to your bosom?  
The owl is in your spirit,  
Blinking through the oldest tree of wisdom—  
And now your fingers are weaving  
The cold pale invisible blossoms of death  
Into a waxen wreath,  
And Time  
Sits down beside you knitting with quick hands  
Grey counterpanes to cover up a grave!

1918

**L**ONELINESS I love,  
And that is why they have called me forth into the  
streets.  
Loneliness I love,  
But the crowd has clutched at me with fawning hands, . . .  
My spirit speaks  
In the scented quietness of a divine melancholy  
Murmuring the tunes  
For which my dreams are the delicate instruments.  
The shadowy silences  
Have made me beautiful and dressed me in velvet dignities,  
And that is why  
The noise of tambourines has maddened my soul into  
dancing,  
And I am clad  
In the lust-lipped whispering of furtive caresses.  
Holiness I love,  
And touching the virginal pierced feet of martyrs,  
The crucified feet  
Nestled among lilies and hallowing candles.  
Holiness I love  
And the melodious absolution falling on my sins.  
But that is why  
Blasphemous priests have forced my hands to tear  
The vesture of secrecy  
Which hides the human nakedness of God.

\* \* \*

1918

I MET an Indian underneath a tree, under a ragged tree,  
His face was yellow and wrinkled like some stone  
whereon a God had writ

And his emaciated fingers drew circles in the dust. . . .  
I bent my mouth to his ear, crying "O father, O Prophet!  
I have wandered far over the earth troubled with doubts  
that will not let me rest,  
Canst thou not tell me with all thy wizardries and medita-  
tions

The purpose of our lives upon this world,  
The secret truth Earth shelters in her womb?"

But he was listening to the whispering of the mountains,  
To the boom of God's paces on the rocks,  
And the swishing steps of his followers in the rivers.  
Then suddenly he pointed to the arched doorway in be-  
tween the hills,  
And the mysterious purple curtain of the dusk that drooped  
from cliff to cliff.  
I saw in his eyes the vision of highborn ghosts,  
Of divine ivory faces wreathed with the flowers of wis-  
dom—  
And I knew that he had found only the half-spoken prom-  
ises of Heaven. . . .

\* \* \*

I saw a drunkard laughing in a tavern,  
His cup was tilted and the wine spilt crimson on the  
sprawled arms and distracted hair of a woman fallen  
asleep,  
I watched him there and wondered  
If ever the bubbling goblins of wine had whispered him  
life's secret.  
But he raised the cup of his carousals and gazed at empti-  
ness,  
Toasting some wild, irreverent dream,

Some flame-red salamander pirouetting among the dead  
waste ashes of time—

And I knew that he had found only the secrets of sleep. . . .

\* \* \*

A woman sat within a little house,  
Scolding and singing ballads to her child,  
And all around came the quarrel of children's voices.  
Yet one boy sat apart within the furthest corner of the room  
Painting an animal with coloured chalks.

I lingered by the fire thinking of life, its vanities and mys-  
teries,

But the woman did not heed me,  
Nor her pale son that sat so hunched and still,  
Painting his visions with the broken chalks,  
For they had discovered the absorbing painful secrets of  
giving birth. . . .

\* \* \*

It was evening as I wandered,  
By a lake two lovers leaned, smiling to see their faces in  
the water,  
For they had found within each other's souls  
An argent flattering mirror wherein to gaze and see their  
faces change with all the moods and shadows of the  
day. . . .

Not here should I discover the answer to bring light into  
my darkness,

Into the dim psychic crystals of my soul opalled with the  
changing colours of unrest—

So I went away into the loneliness, asking the forests and the  
mountains and the sea

The knowledge of life's baffling mysteries.

But they were roaring in a wind of memories,  
Gathering the rain into their bodies to make them fierce  
and strong,

Heaving their shoulders upward to the morning,  
Crowning their foreheads with sunlight.

And I knew that they were Life itself,  
The pushing vehemence that rushes from the strangling  
    arms of Death,  
Nor could they guess  
The purpose of God's beauty in their joy. . . .

1918

FROM the fathomless depth of my boredom, from the last room of its emptiness, an elf has come to play with me.

As comes a little gold spider to a prison cell teasing the criminal from his darkness to tear at a thread of sunlight, and kiss the mouth of a shy morning whispering through the window.

An elf has come to dance with me, blown like a leaf on the path of my autumn lassitude.

Sprightly one, dervish! You are the living adventure born of my dead childhood, you are the small god in the temples of my unbelief, you are the bird that nests in ruined temples, laying your silver eggs by moonlight and singing when the pagan birds are still.

You are the dream-sower in the fields of sleep, you have jingled the star-bells on the hood of darkness, and from the knarled, stark tree of time have flung me the apple of eternal laughter.

1919

OLLING in snow, like kings in ermine coats, the gilt-crowned bottles lie. . . . Our thoughts are dangled in a laughter of leaves as bunches of blue and yellow grapes for faery beggars, for ragged fancies to pluck and taste. Our music shall be the minstrelsy of ghostly ballad-mongers that have stolen from the ashen banquets of death to bless our revels.

Our spirits shall flit like those winged faces of cherubs that never can alight, but swing forever on the azure ribbons of the sky.

And all our dreams and kisses shall be as the rose-leaves falling on ancient festivals, as the shadows of rose-leaves falling on phantom lovers in the sleep-pillared temples of our first archaic passion.

1918

THE roots of our longing are probing the heart of night, delving and twining together that our ultimate truth may grow out of the darkness that bewilders and nourishes. Out of the earth, the dust, the crystals of frost that bind themselves like a tight crown over our heads.

Through the mould and the frost our hair and fingers shall prick their spears of pallor and flame, and in the green ardour of our up-rushing leaves the red goblets of fire shall open, and masses of white flowers, milky as the star-sprays that droop over Heaven, shall splash their bright foam from the darkness, as waves that rise and break into a fountain of blossoms.

1919

126

## VAHDAH

**S**UN-AUREOLED lilies are your priestesses,  
They stand like choirs in silver surplices,  
Melodious streams of silence fill the room,  
And pensive listeners lean within the gloom  
Of purple quietness. A laughter full of holiness—  
Like the wild bells of lilies ringing in the loneliness  
Of star-reflected gardens walled with night,—  
Thrills from your soul which empties its delight  
As rain on lilies, or as sunlight falling slenderly  
To gild their ivory temples, and as moonlight shutting  
tenderly  
Their alabaster doors. . . . A white peace grows,  
And love, within your spirit like a lily and a rose.

1918

## STARLIT silences!

Breeding fears, swarming with sudden deaths,  
With separations, burdens, and despairs,  
Weaving slow eerie fancies in my brain . . .  
Forlorn shorn monks go down the cloisters of quietness  
With tortured crucifixes cut in ivory  
Clasped in their praying hands,  
And psalmed with lips renunciate of kisses . . .  
Forgotten days are painted on the night  
In parables and symbols of remorse  
That jeer from out the wind-stirred tapestries.  
The hangman's rope coils upward like a snake  
Out of the death-coloured waters,  
While the black barges pass  
Funereal,  
Carrying doom from mist to mist. . . .  
And madmen steal about the wintry parks  
Under the high glum walls of an asylum,  
With eyes lit up in phosphorescent ecstasies,  
With fumbling hands.  
That grope for things invisibly obscene.  
Even the clock  
Grown idiot too from keeping madmen's time  
Gibbers the hours away in irrelevant chimes. . . .  
Silence embalms the dead with scented bands  
And is the watchman to deserted houses,  
And draws the violet curtain on the day,  
And fits a mask of silver to the moon.  
Silence brings corpses from the crypts of memory  
And sits them round us in the empty chairs,  
Opens the secret chambers of our hopes  
And shows us there in awful pantomime  
Lust wreathing love with poppies and with ashes,  
And Beauty dressing Sin for carnival,  
And Peace made drunken with a cup of blood.  
It winds as ivy round our listening thoughts

Shutting all sounds away, enclosing us  
Within its stifled virid twilight. . . .

Cry out, sing, make noises,  
Bacchantes, revellers, clowns!  
Bring myriad lamps in clusters, likening grapes  
That spill the wine of light into our gloom;  
Pressing against our lips  
The red grape-kisses of pleasure.  
Bring the hounds,  
The garlanded white ones,  
To bay and snarl and tear the flying rags  
Of stillness shadowing away!  
Lean over me, O Life,  
And whisper all thy lying flatteries  
That drag me back from Silence and her dead.  
I have kept vigil on my soul too long  
Within this vast cathedral of dim sleep,  
Languidly gathering  
The cold grey lilies of the stars  
To slip between her passive waxen hands. . . .

1918

**T**HE mountain is an Emperor.

The clouds are his beard, and the stars his diadem;  
His bauble is the moon;  
He is dressed in silver forests, and the mist his train;  
His feet are two white rivers.

1917

130

**I** KNOW what happiness is—

It is the negation of thought,  
The shutting off  
Of all those brooding phantoms that surround  
As dank trees in a forest  
Cutting the daylight into rags,  
Caging the sun

In rusted prison bars.

Happiness loves to lie at a river's edge

And make no song,

But listen to the water's murmuring wisdom,  
The kissing touch of leaves wind-bowed together,  
The feathery swish of cloud wings on a hill;  
Opening wide the violet-petalled doors  
Of every shy and cloistered sense,  
That all the scent and music of the world  
May rush into the soul.

And happiness expands

The rainbow arch for a procession of dreams,  
For moth-like fancies winged with evening,  
For dove-breasted silences,  
For shadowy reveries

And starry pilgrims. . . .

I know what happiness is—

It is the giving back to Earth  
Of all our furtive thefts,  
The lurid jewels that we stole away  
From passion, sin and pain,  
Because they glittered strangely, luring us  
With their forbidden beauty.

Because our childish fingers curiously

Crave the pale secrets of the moon

And grope for dangerous toys.

Happiness comes in giving back to Earth

The things we took from her with violent hands,  
Remembering only

That her dust is our garment,  
Her fruits our endeavour,  
Her waters our priestess,  
Her leaves our interpreters to God,  
Her hills our infinite patience.

1918

LONG hath the pen lain idle in my hand,  
Or traced slow sentences without a rhyme,  
Words strung at random to beguile the time  
As children threading beads upon a strand.  
I have strayed far away from fairyland  
Whose little hills grow steep and hard to climb;  
I creep along the valleys in the slime,  
Or hide me like an ostrich in the sand.

For I have sought a mellow idleness,  
To be forever buried as a fly  
Lies casketed in amber; where the stress  
Of peril, hunger, Death can never cry  
To wake me from my sanguine weariness,  
Or cloud the lucid stillness with a sigh.

1918

I LAID my heart on a stone  
And stood in the wood to watch.  
Presently a priest came by;  
He hid it in his cowl  
And buried it in the graveyard.  
Now is it grown into a cyclamen tree,  
Clustering over the wall,  
Beckoning far along the twilight road;  
Nodding and singing where the cypress moans,  
Ringing its little bells while the great bell tolls.  
Whiter than ghosts are its flowers,  
And its scent is sweeter than ghostly music—  
All the men and priests that pass  
In the night when the stars lean down,  
Smell the heavy fragrance there  
And feel the gentle touch of dripping dew.  
Then they cross themselves and go  
Hurriedly, warily,  
Dreaming of pale women,  
Under the pale stars.

1918

THE cold light steals into my soul  
Revealing its emptiness,  
The cold winds batter at my heart  
And make its lonely tenant shake with fear—  
The raindrops slide across the window-glass  
Like sighs that fall from patient weariness;  
And coldly smiling time  
Peers with his clock-face, ticking in my brain  
The pulse of a monotonous remorse.

1918

THE caravans of spring are in the town,  
Lighting their brilliant torches in the park,  
Dangling their bells, engirdling each stark  
Black tree with coloured rings. The houses frown  
Against the beryl sky, yet wear a crown  
Of hazy dream, or flash a golden spark  
Of sun-fire in their windows glum and dark;  
The people blow like petals up and down.

But London tires at evening, each grey street  
Mourns as the slow procession passes by,  
Traffic and crowd, and Time on loitering feet.  
Spring droops his lute, the slender echoes sigh,  
And wistfully the jaded revellers meet,  
Their pomp in tatters and their wreaths awry.

1918

I DREAD the beauty of approaching spring

Now the old month is dead and the young moon  
Has pierced my heart with her sharp silver horns.

My tired soul is startled out of sleep

By all the urging joy of bud and leaf,

And in the barren yard where I have paced

Content with prison and despair's monotony,

The trees break into music wild and shrill,

And flowers come out like stars amid the dust,

Bewildering my loneliness with beauty. . . .

For winter with her melancholy face

Shone back my miseries as in a glass,

And wept and whined in harmony with me;

And I could listen by the withering ashes

To the ill-omened drum of dropping rain,

And sighing harken sighs and mute feel silence,

And cold stretch forth my hand into the snows,

And hating, hear the laughter of the wind

Whose mad hands tear the sky.

But now again the promise of the spring

Shall lift my martyred spirit from the dust,

To where the lilied altar shines with peace,

And the white priestess comes

Crowning each candle with a gold desire

Engirdling with pallors

The forehead of a divine ghost.

Ah, but they die, these gods, the candles dwindle

And spring is but a radiant beckoning

To death that follows slowly, silently. . . .

O flitting swallows, fleeting laugh of wind,

O flash of silver in the wings of dawn

That are spread out and closed. O hush of night

Breathless with love, oh swish of whispering tide

That swells and shrinks upon the dreaming shore.

O gentle eyes of children wonder-wide

That grow too soon to weariness and close;  
O scuttling run of rabbit on the hills,  
And flight of lazy rooks above the elm;  
O birds' eggs frail, tinged faintly, nestled close,  
And mystery of flower in the bud.  
O burning galaxy of buttercups,  
And drone of bees above the pouting rose,—  
O twilit lovers stilled with reverie  
And footprints of them swerving on the sand  
And darkness of them clasped against the sky!  
I see beyond the glory of your days  
The grey days marching one behind the other  
To the bleak tunes of silence.  
When mists shall smear the radiance of the moon  
And the lean thief shall pass,  
Snatching the glittering toys away from love,  
Plucking the feathers from the wings of peace.  
And Life herself, grown old and crooked now,  
Shall go the way that her long shadow points,  
Her long black shadow down the roads of sleep.

1918

## TO MY FATHER

**I** CANNOT think that you have gone away,  
You loved the earth—and life lit up your eyes,  
And flickered in your smile that would surmise  
Death as a song, a poem, or a play.  
You were reborn afresh with every day,  
And baffled fortune in some new disguise.  
Ah! can it perish when the body dies,  
Such youth, such love, such passion to be gay?

We shall not see you come to us and leave  
A conqueror—nor catch on fairy wing  
Some slender fancy—nor new wonders weave  
Upon the loom of your imagining.  
The world is wearier, grown dark to grieve  
Her child that was a pilgrim and a king.

1917

## TO MY MOTHER

**A**T evening when the twilight curtains fall,  
Before the lamps are lit within my room,  
My memories hang bright upon the gloom,  
Like ancient frescoes painted on the wall.

And I can hear the call of birds and bells  
And shadowy sound of waves, and wind through leaves  
And wind that rustles through the burnished sheaves,  
And far off voices whispering farewells.

I dream again the joy I used to know  
While straying by the sea that hardly sighed  
A sorrow in my singing, as the tide  
Crept up to clasp me, smiled, and let me go.

And I remember all the glad lost hours,  
The racing of brown rabbits on the hill,  
The winds that prowled around the lonely mill,  
Laburnum laughter, music of the flowers.

The berries plucked with loitering delight,  
Staining the dusk with purple, till the thought  
Of starry little ghosts behind us caught  
Our hearts and made us fearful of the night.

The London evenings huddled in the rain  
Whose misty prisms shone with lamplight pale,  
Making our hearts seem sinister and frail,  
Fainting our thoughts with mystery and pain.

I have a world of memories to dream,  
To touch with loving fingers as a sigh  
Revives a little flame and lets it die.  
Ah, were the days as lovely as they seem

Now that they look so peaceful lying dead?  
And is it all the hope of Joy we have,  
The broken trophies of the things she gave  
And took away to give us dreams instead?

The things we love and lose before we find  
The way to love them well enough and keep,  
That now are woven on the looms of sleep  
That now are only music of the wind.

1918

**L**ONDON grows sad at evening,  
And we at the windows sit  
To watch her moods,  
Wearying with her.  
Even a noise of laughter from the street  
Sounds in our ears  
Like something dropped and shattered on the stone.  
Then her musician comes,  
A wandering, malicious spirit;  
The organ grinder, playing those old tunes  
We know too well,  
That hurt us with fatigue.  
Till Hope like a harlequin,  
His glitter hidden in a ragged coat,  
The lamplighter, goes by,  
Planting his pale flames in the dusk.

1918

AH! the spring,  
Sudden, surprising,  
Melting the iron scales around the heart  
As the earliest sun  
Melts the cold case of dew on leaves—  
Ah! the streets like odorous rivers  
Chanting the echoes of seas—  
Ah! the flowers in shop-windows  
Beseaching, persuasive,  
Reluctant to let their beauty flow away  
From thoughts that mirror them in passing—  
Beautiful exiles  
Fluttering in their chains,  
Thrilled with the noise of bees,  
The music of meadows  
Still hovering around them—  
Flower fingers, flower-touches,  
Passional, reminiscent,  
Rippling the soul's still waters—  
Flower galaxies,  
Enamelled bridges arching from dream to dream,  
Garlands splashing over the eyes of satyrs,  
The furtive woodland eyes,  
The pointed inquisitive ears—  
Pallid flowers foaming on hill-crests,  
Gushing heavenwards  
From a sea of stormy mountains—  
Opening and shutting exquisite doors,  
As the senses open to music,  
Shut upon silence,  
Open to beauty,  
Close their caskets upon love—  
Ah! the flowers in the windows,  
Amorous of poets  
Making a chaplet of song!

1919

143

## THE UNDERTONE OF THE VOLGA BOAT SONG

O God,  
We have nothing to give Thee,  
We are as fog that drifts on the river,  
As the wailing of voices blown through mist—  
We are as those that carry bags of dust  
Heaping them with the dust—  
We are covered with the dust of days,  
We are pale from the dust of dreamless nights  
Shaken before we were rested—  
At dawn we are found by the sun  
Adrift, labouring, thinking of nothing—  
Our wine is bitter, it has made us drunk,  
Our bread is coarse,  
We are always athirst and hungry. . . .  
O God, we have been patient,  
We have grown old in weariness,  
Our lives are as the labouring of the wind—  
We are huddled together in the dawn,  
The sleeping houses pass us,  
The dawn is a field of nettles  
Stinging us from rest. . . .  
O God,  
We have nothing to give Thee but patience,  
We have suffered evil and believed Thee good,  
Thy face is the gentleness of the distance,  
The river is placid with the thought of Thee—  
Our tears have washed us harder than the rocks,  
And like the rocks we wait,  
Grow old with waiting. . . .  
Weariness, the river  
Flowing through banks of sleep. . . .  
O God, we have nothing to give Thee,  
Take our great weariness,  
We that have never lived and never slept,  
Take our long weariness, O God! . . .



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